

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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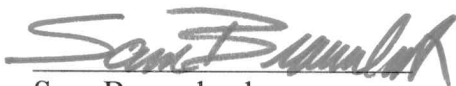
Dear Colleague:

We commend to your attention the 2009 Annual report released today by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). USCIRF is an independent U.S. government commission that monitors violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief abroad, and gives independent policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress. The Commission is led by nine Commissioners: three appointed by the President, three by the House, and three by the Senate.

USCIRF's 2009 Annual Report makes policy recommendations on 28 nations. Many of these nations top the U.S. foreign policy agenda and include Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Pakistan, and Sudan. The report includes the recommendation that the Secretary of State designate fourteen countries in 2009 as "countries of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act (1998) for their egregious violations of religious freedom, and highlights the campaign waged by some member states of the United Nations to undermine religious freedom standards through the flawed "defamation of religions" concept.

The freedom of religion or belief is a foundational right of the international legal system, established in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Religious freedom is also the touchstone of the American constitutional system, and 2009 marks the tenth anniversary of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

We encourage you to read USCIRF's 2009 Annual Report and meet with USCIRF Commissioners and staff to discuss their findings and recommendations. The report is available online at www.uscifr.gov and a copy will be delivered to your office in the coming weeks.



Sam Brownback
United States Senator



Benjamin Cardin
United States Senator